



# SHERWOOD STATE SCHOOL

## Communication Policy

At Sherwood State School we are committed to open, honest and timely communication. We are also committed to communication being respectful, measured, sensitive and constructive. In adhering to these principles, we aim to strengthen the goodwill and the positive partnerships between parents and the school.

### **Our school will:**

- Communicate in a timely manner, through the newsletter, website, Facebook, emails, newsflashes, forms and telephone (SMS and calls) and in person.
- Communicate and consult on matters which are operational on a day-to-day basis as well as matters which guide the way our school and school community functions, such as in policy and Strategic Plan development.
- Invite parents to contact us in writing or in person about any matter, to bring up concerns and give feedback through contact with the principal, staff and P&C.
- Ensure the principal and staff are accessible and willing to assist. However, in order to prioritise time correctly, and to keep our focus on teaching and learning, staff should be contacted in the first instance in order to arrange a suitable time for further conversation. Interviews should not impact on teaching time.

### COMMUNICATION METHODS

#### **1. Newsletter & Newsflashes**

*Newsletters and Newsflashes are our main means of informing the school community about what is happening in the school. These are sent out to parents via email every fortnight.*

#### **2. Website**

*Our school website is for the school and wider community to gain an understanding of policies, facilities, programs and projects at Sherwood State School. It is a place to showcase the work by students, teachers and parents as well as advertise and promote our school.*

#### **3. Facebook**

*Our school Facebook page is used to promote the school and associated events, communicate achievements and communicate general information and reminders. Please remember that we want our Facebook page to be used for the right reasons – please be respectful, kind and supportive. Please **DO NOT** use this page as a discussion forum. If you have a question or feedback, please go through the usual channels (eg. Contact the classroom teacher or the office). The Department of Education sets very clear and concise guidelines around what is and is not allowed on the school's Facebook page.*

#### **4. Parent – Teacher Interviews and Reports**

*Interview times are arranged for parents to meet with their child's teacher to discuss individual progress. Interviews are held in Term 1 and Term 3 in the school hall. We regard these occasions as a vital two-way flow of information concerning children. Home and school mutually benefit from these sessions. Achievement in all curriculum areas will be reported on twice a year in written format via the Report Card. These are completed in Term 2 and Term 4.*

#### **5. Email**

*We acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via email. However, there are also shortcomings. We need to be aware of the expectations for both staff and parents in the use of email as a communication tool as outlined below:*

#### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

*Email is an environmentally friendly way of communicating that can save time when used effectively.*

## **Expectations of Both Staff and Parents**

When communicating via email, staff and parents are expected to adhere to email etiquette, including:

- Emails are at their best when they are brief and informative. Issues that require a level of detailed discussion should be dealt with in person or over the phone.
- Emails should always be respectful and constructive. If the email relates to a concern or problem, it ought to be focussed on understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- Avoid sending negative or confrontational emails. Email is not to be used to vent.
- Never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents). Likewise, emails containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without the permission of the sender.
- The tone of intent of emails can be misunderstood, especially where humour or sarcasm is involved. Be conscious of this.
- Staff and parents are not expected to respond to emails that are contentious. A face-to-face meeting should be arranged in this circumstance.
- Make sure the purpose of your email is clear, for example, do you require specific action or is the email for information only?
- Staff and parents must be careful not to disclose the email addresses of others without permission to do so. Using BCC is a preferable option for group emails.

### **Expectations Staff**

- Email should not be used to discuss a sensitive issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not been previously discussed with the parent.
- When an email is received from a parent that requires some time to gather information and reply properly, the staff member should respond acknowledging that the email has been received and indicate when an informed response will be sent.
- Staff will aim to reply to parent emails within two working days.
- Staff are not to respond to abusive emails and should forward them to the principal.

### **Expectations of Parents**

- Remember to respect staff personal time. Parents should not send emails outside of work hours and expect an immediate response.
- Please only send non-vital messages by this communication mode. For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is not to go home on the bus this afternoon, as the teacher may not see your email until late in the day.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All staff and parents are responsible for using email in accordance with this policy.

It is the responsibility of school leadership to ensure the policy is brought to the attention of:

- Parents on enrolment of their child
- The whole school community annually
- Staff as part of their induction process